

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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R 141138Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1635

INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL UDORN

CINCPAC

DIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 4298

E. O. 11652: ADS 14 MARCH 1976

TAGS: PFOR, TH, CB

SUBJ: THAI REACTIONS TO THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA

REF : A. BANGKOK 3698; B. BANGKOK 4196;

C. BANGKOK 4197; D. BANGKOK 4118

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUMMARY: THE RTG IS NOT YET TAKING MILITARY PRECAUTIONS ALONG THE CAMBODIAN BORDER. WHILE OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE OUTCOME, THE RTG IS TAKING THE LINE THAT THE WAR IS AN INTERNAL CAMBODIAN PROBLEM, WHICH THE THAI, IN ANY EVENT, CANNOT AFFECT. LOWER PUBLIC INTEREST IN CAMBODIA REFLECTS IN PART THE FACT THAT DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONCERNS ARE OVERSHADOWING THE CAMBODIAN SITUATION IN THE THAI PRESS AND PUBLIC AWARENESS. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING THE COURSE OF A MARCH 14 FAREWELL CALL ON GENERAL KRIT SIWARA, ROYAL THAI COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, THE AMBASSADOR ASKED KRIT WHETHER THE THAI WERE MOVING ANY FORCES TO THE CAMBODIAN BORDER. KRIT SAID THAT THERE WERE SOME TRADITIONALLY
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THERE, BUT THAT THE RTA HAD DISPATCHED NO NEW UNITS. THE THAI

WERE WATCHING THE SITUATION. BATTAMBAND AND POIPET WERE QUIET. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED WHETHER THERE WAS INCREASED INFILTRATION FROM CAMBODIA INTO THAILAND. KRIT, WITH THE HELP OF HIS INTELLIGENCE CHIEF, ANSWERED THAT THERE HAD ALWAYS BEEN PEOPLE CROSSING THE BORDER, BUT NO UNUSUAL INCREASE IN THAT ACTIVITY.

2. IN A MARCH 14 CONVERSATION WITH THE DCM, GENERAL KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN, SUPREME COMMAND CHIEF OF STAFF, EXPRESSED GENERAL THAI CONCERN ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN CAMBODIA. KRIANGSAK ASKED ABOUT THE CHANCES FOR THE U.S. SUPPLEMENTARY AID APPROPRIATION.

3. IN A PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER MARCH 12, A WORKING-LEVEL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA) OFFICIAL DIRECTLY CONCERNED WITH THE CAMBODIA PROBLEM EVINCED A CARAPACE MENTALITY REGARDING THE CAMBODIAN WAR, AND REPEATEDLY ASKED RHE- TORICALLY WHAT THAILAND COULD DO ABOUT THE OUTCOME ANYWAY. HE WENT ON TO REPEAT THE LONG-STANDING THAI POLICY OF WANTING TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH WHATEVER GOVERNMENT CAME TO POWER IN PHNOM PENH, AND A DISINCLINATION TO TAKE ANY ACTIONS THAT WOULD PREJUDICE SUCH FUTURE OPTIONS.

4. THAI CONCERNS OVER DOMESTIC POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS HAVE ECLIPSED PUBLIC AND PRESS ATTENTION TO THE URGENCY OF THE SITUATION THE GKR IS CURRENTLY FACING IN PHNOM PENH. WHILE THE FRONT PAGES CARRY THE MORE SENSATIONAL PICTURES AND WIRE SERVICE ACCOUNTS OF THE CURRENT FIGHTING, EDITORIALS EXAMINING THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THAILAND HAVE BEEN LACKING FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS DUE TO PREOCCUPATION WITH DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS.

5. REF D (EXDIS) DISCUSSES THE KING'S CURRENT ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CAMBODIAN SITUATION AS HE EXPRESSED IT TO THE AMBASSADOR ON MARCH 12.

6. COMMENT: APART FROM THE THAI MILITARY, THE GENERAL FEELING APPEARS TO BE THAT THE WAR IS AN INTERNAL CAMBODIAN PROBLEM, AND DESPITE ITS STRONG PREFERENCE FOR A NON-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT, THAILAND HAS NO ABILITY TO INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME OF THE WAR. BOTH ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER PHICHA RATTAKUN AND PRIME MINISTER-DESIGNATE KHUKRIT PRAMOT FUELED THIS ATTITUDE IN CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESS CONFERENCES ON MARCH 13 (REFS B AND C). WE INFER FROM THE TONE OF THE CONVERSATION WITH THE MFA THAT THE THAI ARE GRADUALLY ABANDONING (IN PRIVATE) THEIR PREVIOUS STAND THAT THEY WILL DEAL WITH WHATEVER GOVERNMENT COMES TO POWER LEGITIMATELY, AND ARE PREPARING THEMSELVES TO DEAL WITH WHATEVER GOVERNMENT COMES TO POWER BY WHATEVER MEANS.

7. PHICHA'S STATEMENT PAYS LIP SERVICE TO THE CAMBODIAN

PEOPLE'S CHOICE, BUT ALSO USES THE FORMULATION OF
BEING WILLING TO RECOGNIZE THE "LEGAL GOVERNMENT WHICH THE
PEOPLE OF THAT COUNTRY RECOGNIZE AS BEING THEIR GOVERNMENT."
THIS LATTER PHRASING SKIRTS THE WILLINGNESS WITH WHICH THE
CAMBODIANS WOULD RECOGNIZE ANY NEW GOVERNMENT.
KINTNER

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